

Journeys through EXPAND

Providing Affordable Fitness, Leisure and Cultural Arts Programs for
Adults with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury and other similar
Neurological Conditions.



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Trish Zornio's Journey with a Brain Injury—by Intern Emily Couper

On March 9th of 2013, at 27 years old, Trish Zornio, was faced with a minor concussion when her ski detached from her bindings during a jump and struck her in the head. She was advised to avoid physical activity for two weeks to allow her brain to heal, which was a huge disappointment because on the last day of her two weeks she had a ski trip scheduled with a big group of friends. Trish, against her urge to ski, brought her snowshoes while everyone else hit the slopes. However, on their drive back from Steamboat, they were faced with a white out. Due to reckless driving of the car she was in, the driver lost control of her vehicle in which Trish was a passenger, overcorrected, and the car went plummeting off the side of the mountain falling roughly a hundred feet after just missing the guard rail. The other passengers of the car came out with minor injuries such as broken ribs, but Trish knew she wasn't alright. The ski's had been tied up in the back and came loose during the fall, hitting her in the head. After waiting for emergency services for about an hour and a half, Trish was taken to the nearest medical service, where she was treated by a small family practice doctor, and she was discharged that day with the only advice that it was a TBI, but she should be fine and to seek help if it got worse.

Trish kept telling herself she was okay, but in the following weeks faced many obstacles. Trish had been working at the local university and was in the process of applying for medical school when she started having myoclonus, seizures, and migraines and spent most of her days sleeping. She was not well able to read or write and was frustrated by not being able to do simple math. She couldn't drive and was relying on the support of her friends and family for transportation. As a result, she lost her job and her health insurance. Being a "go, go, go" type of person, Trish had a hard time asking for help, and allowing herself to rest her brain when needed.

Offered by the City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Department

www.BoulderParks-Rec.org

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Trish's Journey Continued

Doctors told her she wouldn't fully recover, but to Trish this was unacceptable. She went to physical therapy and cognitive therapy, but had to discontinue due to not having health insurance. She then started doing therapy at home based off of what she knew from previously working in a hospital and doing her own research. Many days she relied on the support of her friends and family to force her to get up and push herself, even if it was simply getting out of bed to walk up and down the block and then going back to bed. She fell into a deep depression and at times wished she wouldn't have survived the accident, but because of her neuropsychology background she knew that these feelings were normal and temporary and that she needed to keep herself in check.

One thing that really bothered Trish was that she was socially limited. It became more and more difficult to hang out with her friends and keeping a job was rare. After some time, eventually Trish was able to get hired for part time, easier jobs, but once they found out she had a TBI, she would be let go or something would mysteriously come up and it wouldn't work out. The one place that was open with her disability and hired her was the Center for People with Disabilities.

Trish had begun to exhaust her transportation resources, after she had recovered enough, she attempted to take the public bus. However, even though Trish would wear sunglasses and earplugs, the lights and sounds that come along with taking the bus were over stimulating and exhausting to her. Additionally, the public bus doesn't always take the straight way to get to where you want to end up and sometimes she would be en route to her destination for an hour and a half, leaving her little time to participate in any type of activity before her body would be too exhausted.

Trish was forced to change her identity. She had gone from being the intelligent active person to not being able to read or write. That is when Trish reached out to the North Boulder Recreation Center because it was within walking distance from her house and she attempted an entry level yoga class with her ear plugs and sunglasses. Even this pushed Trish farther than she felt comfortable so she approached the instructor and asked for help with recommendations of other classes that may be less stimulating. The instructor informed Trish of the Journeys program. Little did she know that Journeys would become the most positive thing that helped her most in her road to recovery. Journeys provided low key recreation activities that also gave her a network of people that were like her and could truly understand what she was going through. She no longer felt like the odd one out. Through the program, she was able to have more of a routine type life. Before her injury, Trish had been very active, but the Journeys program taught her a plethora of activities and introduced her to her creative side and she was able to participate in.

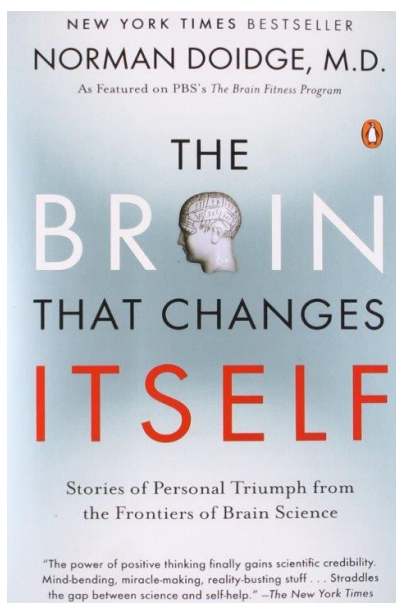
Trish's Journey Continued

It's been nearly two years since her injury and Trish is feeling like she is finally getting closer to where she was. She still doesn't drive, but the cognitive and physical therapies have helped her regain much of what was lost. In fact, she has regained her position in academics and has accepted a job at Stanford University that started March 2nd as a research coordinator for the Department of Cardiovascular Medicine. This has been a huge step for Trish to show herself that she's still got it and she can do things she used to do. She continues to have modifications to her daily life, but has been able to find solutions through the help of friends, family, and her own studies of traumatic brain injuries.



Trish's advice for peers with TBI's would be to not underestimate the injury and know when to ask for help sooner than later. It's important to take time for your recovery even though it isn't always physically visible. It's normal and necessary to sleep a lot, but then wake up and push yourself physically and mentally. Trish is interested in talking to others about what she's been through in hopes of being able to help people that have been or are in her situation. To view a recent talk given by Trish, follow this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8G0d02Le84>

Book Review—by Cory Lasher, CTRS



I found this book to be very interesting in that it provides me hope that anyone of us, including those who have a brain injury, has the capability to keep our brains young and slow the process of aging. Doidge introduces us to amazing stories at the cutting edge of the brain science and the emerging discipline of 'neuroplasticity'. We just need to get out of our daily routine by challenging ourselves both mentally and physically. The brain hates a static environment and loves to make decisions and solve problems. As the old adage goes: "If you don't use it you will lose it". To jump start your grey matter, stop using GPS and other gadgets for simple tasks. Memorize maps, phone numbers and email addresses, study something you are not good at and take up a new hobby. Find new routes to get to your destination instead of taking the same route each day. Read, read and read. Most importantly, try something NEW with Journeys. All programs offered through Journeys can assist in jump starting your grey matter. Hope to see you in a class soon!